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THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CHARLOTTE COUNTY RECOGNIZES WORLD AIDS DAY

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Port Charlotte, Fla. — On Sunday, December 1, the Florida Department of Health Charlotte County recognized World AIDS Day. Each year on December 1, people around the world observe World AIDS Day. The day provides an opportunity to show solidarity for those affected by HIV and memorialize those who have lost their lives to the disease. This year's national World AIDS Day theme is "Ending the HIV Epidemic: Community by Community." Over the weekend, communities across the state came together in support of those living with HIV and to remember those we've lost.

In 2018, there were 119,661 people living with HIV in Florida. More than half of the 4,906 new diagnoses were for people between the ages of 20-39. Our state experiences a high burden of the HIV epidemic, and the Department is committed to connecting people to the resources they need to be able to live long, healthy lives. The first step is to get tested.

"This World AIDS Day, we show our support for all persons living with HIV/AIDS in Florida and commemorate the lives that have been lost to this illness," said Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Nuñez. "We remain committed to ending the epidemic across the Sunshine State."

"We will never forget those who have lost their lives to HIV/AIDS and we will always remain committed to caring for persons living with this disease and preventing transmission," said Florida Surgeon General Scott A. Rivkees. "Florida Health has one of the nation's most comprehensive statewide plans to eliminate HIV/AIDS and we look forward to the day when this epidemic has been eradicated."

Florida is a national leader in HIV testing and there are many ways to get tested. HIV testing is provided at all 67 county health Departments. Visit KnowYourHIVStatus.com to learn about testing options in your area or to order a free at-home HIV testing kit mailed directly to the address of your choice (while supplies last).

The Department of Health in Charlotte County offers confidential HIV testing and counseling as well as Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), an anti-HIV medication to prevent HIV negative individuals at risk from becoming infected with HIV. For questions about services in Charlotte County, call 941-624-7200.

For those who test positive, earlier diagnosis leads to more successful treatment. Immediate treatment with antiretroviral therapy (ART) typically leads to long, healthy lives for people living with HIV. It's also a method of HIV prevention. ART reduces the amount of HIV in the body, which makes it harder to transmit to others.

For those who test negative, there are more prevention options than ever before. A health care provider can do a risk/needs assessment to determine appropriate next steps, which might include taking PrEP and using condoms to reduce the risk of acquiring HIV. Prevention may also take the form of regular retesting.

In February 2019, President Trump announced his administration's goal to end the HIV epidemic in the United States by 2030. The resulting initiative, called "Ending the HIV Epidemic: A Plan for America" is already well under way. The goal of the initiative is to reduce new HIV infections by 75 percent in the next five years and by 90 percent by 2030.

We have the power to both prevent and treat HIV. For more information, call 1-800-FLA-AIDS, or 1-800-35224371; en Espanol, 1-800-545-SIDA; in Creole, 1-800-AIDS-101. To learn where to get tested, visit KnowYourHIVStatus.com.

Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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